

Top Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

RECENT ACTIVITIES IN NORTH VIETNAM
(9-15 SEPTEMBER 1968)

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 September 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Recent Activities in North Vietnam
(9-15 September 1968)

Summary

North Vietnamese military and logistics activities in the Panhandle continued to be hampered by the effects of recent floodings, although conditions have improved somewhat. Truck sightings were up from the previous week, but they were still 45 percent below the weekly average noted since 31 March. Watercraft sightings increased by 115 percent above the abnormally low level of sighting of the previous week and were again up to the high levels of August

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The buildup in logistical facilities just north of the 19th Parallel continues to be observed.

North of the 20th Parallel, monsoon storms in August and early September have hampered reconstruction efforts and caused additional damage. The floods probably have been partly responsible for the slowdown in the construction of the Kep-Hon Gai rail line. Reconstruction has begun on the rail bridge at Ninh Binh that was destroyed by floods in August. The monsoon storms aggravated shipping congestion in Haiphong. Several collisions occurred, ships reportedly went aground, and arrivals and departures were delayed. Flooding of agricultural lands has further clouded the prospects for the tenth-month rice crop.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Economic Research and the Office of Current Intelligence and was coordinated with the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.

South of the 20th ParallelLogistics Activities

1. Continued poor weather and the temporary but widespread effects of flood damage to the highways in the southern Panhandle contributed to the relatively low number of truck sightings and losses reported this past week, as shown in the tabulation below. Sightings and losses for the past week were about 45 percent below the weekly average since 1 April, although they were up significantly from the previous week.

	<u>Trucks</u>				
	<u>Sighted</u>	<u>De-</u> <u>stroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Destroyed</u> <u>and</u> <u>Damaged</u>	<u>Effective</u> <u>Losses a/</u>
This week b/ (9-15 Sep)	380	47	59	106	50
Last week (2-8 Sep)	299	77	34	111	66
Weekly average (since 1 Apr)	675	122	77	199	111

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b. Preliminary data.

2. There were no large concentrations of vehicles detected within the area under attack this past week. However, groups of 10 to 20 trucks were spotted in widely separated areas of the North Vietnamese Panhandle that were not subject to heavy flooding.

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[redacted] continued flooding of the Panhandle in the basin areas along the coast. [redacted] of the areas around Quang Khe and Dong Hoi still show signs of flooding. There has also been flood damage along inland roads, especially along Route 15.

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4. [redacted] detected another recently improved and active rail-to-road transshipment and storage area located at Ga Cau Giat, only a short distance (10 nautical miles) north of the 19th Parallel. Five transshipment areas are in use, with moderate amounts of unidentified material stockpiled in several of the larger ones. Serviceable transport equipment noted in the immediate area consisted of 20 rail cars, two probable truck-locomotives, and about five cargo and POL type trucks. [redacted]

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[redacted] revealed about 100 motor trucks within a one-mile radius of Ga Cau Giat, most of which were moving at the time on the several roads in the area. Included in this count were 19 POL tanker trucks and 80 cargo trucks, 27 of which had been converted to POL trucks.

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[redacted] identified three extensive and active rail-to-road transshipment areas located relatively close to the 19th Parallel. These areas -- Tu My, Ga Cau Giat, and Qui Vinh -- are all within about 20 miles of the 19th Parallel and provide the enemy with safe havens from which supplies can be quickly shuttled south toward the DMZ and southern Laos.

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[redacted] continue to show that the rail line between the 19th Parallel and Vinh is not being used much, even for shuttling between interdicted points along the line. Both important rail crossings at Dien Chau and Tam Da remain interdicted, and all but one piece of rolling stock noted along the line apparently has not moved for an extended period of time.

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** Truck-locomotives are standard highway trucks fitted with flanged wheels. Two such "locomotives" operating in tandem and pulling usually three 2-axle cars of from 5 to 8 tons capacity are used extensively on the rail line south of Thanh Hoa.*

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7. Watercraft sightings increased substantially this week, [redacted] 723 waterborne logistic craft, compared with 336 last week and a weekly average of 450 since 31 March. Heavy water traffic was reported along the Song Nghen between the Song Ca and Ha Tinh and along the Song Ngan which leads southwest from the Vinh area. The increased watercraft activity may be a result of the recent floods.

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8. [redacted] two high-speed coastal vessels on a small tributary of the Nguon Nay near Quang Khe (see the map). These vessels can carry up to 100 tons and are believed to have a speed of at least 20 knots. They have been used during previous bombing pauses to move material from Haiphong along the coast to points as far south as Quang Khe. Recently they have been used in lighter-ing operations at the port of Haiphong. Several also have been observed at Thanh Hoa. The use of coasters south of Thanh Hoa is unusual and suggests that they are moving high-priority cargo.

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Logistical Facilities

9. [redacted] the recent construction of seven new storage buildings near the village of Cong Thanh located on Route 118 several miles northeast of the Bai Thuong Airfield. The structures are revetted, and numerous personnel trenches are located nearby. In Cong Thanh village, approximately 200 POL drums were noted stacked alongside a canal. These drums, probably delivered to the area by watercraft, possibly are destined for use at the nearby airfield.

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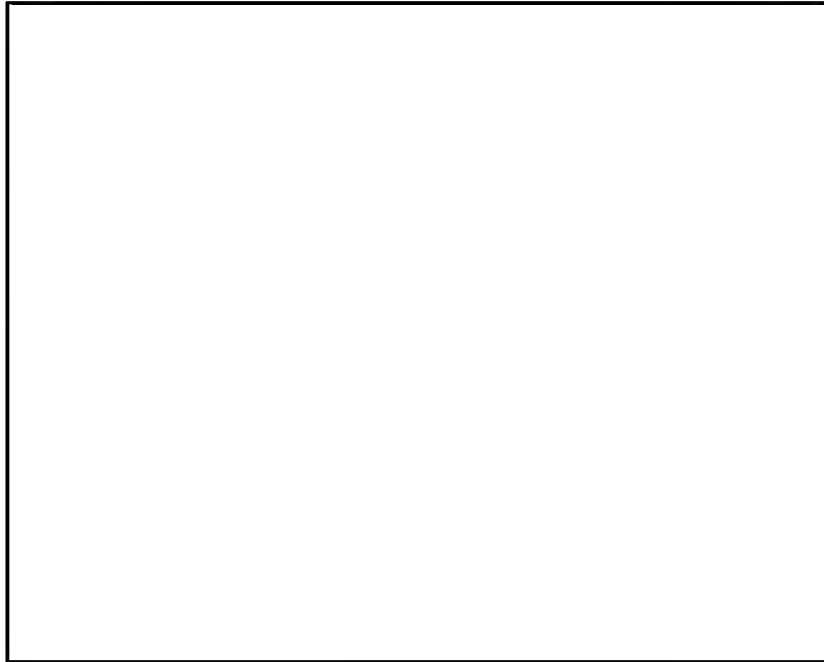
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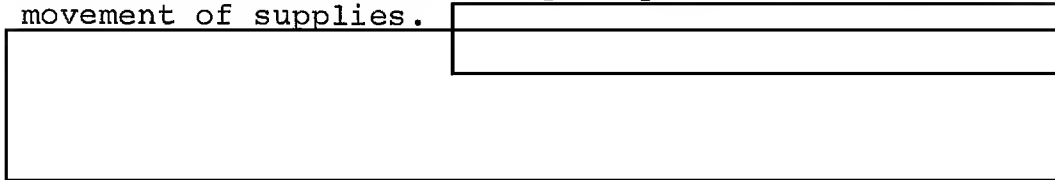
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11. Bad weather and some flooding in southern North Vietnam apparently kept logistic activity at a relatively low level. Normally, the first week of the month is one of the peak periods for the movement of supplies.

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North of the 20th Parallel

Industry

12. Construction of protective blast walls around powerplants is continuing, but little additional progress has been made in the repair of damaged generating capacity. Some 50 percent of national generating capacity remains out of service. Earth scarring noted not far from the Thach Ba hydroelectric project may possibly be related to that project, although there are no indications that construction has been resumed on the main dam and powerhouse. There is little evidence of progress in the repair of the rest of North Vietnam's bomb-damaged industry.



Logistics

13. Although typhoon "Wendy" was reduced in intensity to a tropical storm as it approached North Vietnam on 8 September, it caused difficulties at the port of Haiphong.

There were other reports of groundings and difficulties, including the sinking of several fishing vessels. Delays and disruption caused by the storm will increase the already high turnaround time for freighters departing Haiphong. The turnaround time in August was 32 days, almost the same as the record high of 33 days in August 1967.

14. What appears to be equipment for an entire SAM battalion the Hanoi-Vinh rail line. The train was located just north of Ninh Binh heading toward Thanh Hoa. The make-up of the equipment on the train suggests that an additional battalion is being deployed south of the 19th Parallel where five SAM battalions are currently deployed. It is possible, however, that the battalion could be deployed in the Thanh Hoa area just south of the 20th Parallel.

Construction

15. the Kep-Hon Gai rail line shows that only about one mile of new track has been laid since 26 July. Construction had progressed steadily on the line since it was first observed in late 1967 until heavy rain began in June 1968. The line could be put into operation in early 1969, but extensive diking will be needed to eliminate the threat of chronic flooding in the low areas traversed by the rail line.

16. Reconstruction has begun on the important rail bridge at Ninh Binh south of Nam Dinh which was completely destroyed by floods in August.

The North Vietnamese are currently dependent on a rail ferry bridge to bypass the destroyed bridge. On the Hanoi-Haiphong rail line, large quantities of construction material have been moved to the site of the rail bridge at

Hai Duong. The Hai Duong Rail Bridge West is one of the two remaining major rail bridges destroyed by US bombing that has not been repaired -- the other is at Viet Tri on the Hanoi-Lao Cai line.

Air Operations

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18. The North Vietnamese aircraft inventory has remained at about the same level for several weeks. The North Vietnamese Air Force is credited with the following jet aircraft:

	<u>North Vietnam</u>	<u>China</u>	<u>Total</u>
MIG-15/17	19	96	115
MIG-21	30	10	40
IL-28	4	4	8

Agriculture

19. Heavy rainfall during the last half of August and the first week of September has resulted in extensive flooding in some of the important rice-producing provinces in North Vietnam. The extent of the damage, however, cannot be determined at this time. The recently transplanted tenth-month rice crop has been beset with planting delays and reported shortages of fertilizer which, together with the recent flooding, make it highly likely that the harvest in November will be below last year's disappointing harvest.

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be the first North Vietnamese purchase of trucks from the Free World since 1954. The North Vietnamese are also buying urea fertilizer from several

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Naval

22. North Vietnamese naval units were noted moving from Hanoi to Haiphong in early September.

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naval craft, previously based at Haiphong, have been active in the Thanh Hoa area, and it is possible that this movement to Haiphong is to augment the naval forces from which these craft were drawn.

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